

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 /078 W

----- 101829

R 090625Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9671

INFO AMEBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

KUALA LUMPUR 2857

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 342

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP

SUBJ/ AL TOHAMY IN MANILA

REF: A) JAKARTA 285; (NOTAL) B) KUALA LUMPUR 0074 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING MOST RECEINT VISIT TO MANILA OF
ISLAMIC SECRETARY GENERAL AL TOHAMY (JAN 3-5) GOVERNMENT
ARRANGED MEETING WITH DEFECTED EX-REBEL LEADERS IN EFFORT
TO CONVINCE AL TOHAMY THAT NUR MISUARI OF MNLF DOES NOT
SPEAK FOR ALL PHILIPPINE MUSLIMS OR EVEN ALL MUSLIM DISSI-
DENTS. PRESS HAS SUBSEQUENTLY GIVEN ENTHUSIASTIC PLAY TO
AL TOHAMY REMARKS FROM KL (AS REPORTED BY WIRE SERVICES)
INDICATING THAT THIS PLOY SUCCEEDED AT LEAST TO A DEGREE.
IN COURSE OF VISIT PHILIPPINE PUBLIC INFORMED FOR THE
FIRST TIME OF FORTHCOMING GOP-MNLF TALKS TO BE HELD IN
JIDDA LATER THIS MONTH. AL TOHAMY'S ERRATIC COMINGS AND
GOINGS CONTINUE TO OFFEND HIS UNCONSULTED ISLAMIC DIPLO-
MATIC COLLEAGUES BUT HIS ROLE IN SETTING UP JIDDA TALKS
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(PLUS RECENT EVIDENCE THAT INDONESIANS ARE WILLING TO LET

HIM SHARE IN PEACE-MAKING EFFORTS) INDICATE THAT HE IS NOT USELESS. END SUMMARY

1. IN ADDITION TO MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS AL TOHAMY CONFERRED WITH FORMER REBEL LEADERS ON PRESIDENTIAL YACHT ON JANUARY 5. THESE INDIVIDUALS, SHEPHERDED BY SOWESCOM COMMANDER ADMIRAL ESPALDON AND (MUSLIM) GENERAL LAO, INCLUDED CURRENT VICE-GOVERNOR OF BASILAN PROVINCE, MAYOR OF MAIMBUNG IN JOLO AND OTHER DEFECTEES WHO HAVE BEEN REWARDED WITH GOVERNMENT JOBS. ACCORDING TO MUSLIM SOURCES, THEY TOLD TOHAMY THAT NUR MISUARI DID NOT REPRESENT WHOLE SPECTRUM OF MUSLIM OPINION AND THAT HIS INFLUENCE WEAK IN REBEL TERRITORY AT LOCAL LEVEL. COMMENT: POINT OF THIS BIT OF STAGECRAFT WAS CLEARLY TO CONVINCE AL TOHAMY THAT MISUARI CANNOT SPEAK FOR ALL FILIPINO MUSLIMF OR EVEN ALL INSURGENTS. JUDGING FROM AL TOHAMY'S SUBSEQUENT REMARKS IN KUALA LUMPUR (SEE BELOW) PLOY SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED AT LEAST UP TO A POINT. END COMMENT.

2. FOLLOWING THIS MEETING AL TOHAMY ABRUPTLY DEPARTED FOR JAKARTA AND JUALA LUMPUR ACCOMPANIED BY ADMIRAL ESPALDON IN PRIVATE JET BELONGING TO FILIPINO BUSINESSMAN. HE CANCELLED APPOINTMENT WITH NON-EX-REBEL MANILA MUSLIM LEADERS (INCLUDING SOME YOUNGER CIVIL SERVANTS AS WELL AS DISCREDITED OLD ARISTOCRATS) WHO HAD BEEN WAITING FOR FOUR HOURS AND WERE LCRTZY ANNOYED. (CONTRARY TO AP ACCOUNT AL TOHAMY DID NOT RPT NOT FLY TO SOUTH OR LEAVE MANILA AREA.)

3. UNLIKE PREVIOUS AL TOHAMY VISITS THIS ONE GIVEN HEAVY PUBLICITY, FOR OBVIOUS REASON THAT MOST OF HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE BAUMG GRIST FOR GOP MILL. CONTROLLED PRESS CARRIED HIS PRE-DEPARTURE REMARKS THAT NUR MISUARI HAD AGREED TO DIRECT TALKS ON "NEUTRAL GROUND," AND THAT MARCOS HAD SHOWN WILLINGNESS TO FIND SOLUTION TO "PROBLEMS" (UNDEFINED). MANILA PAPERS ALSO HAD FIELD DAY WITH HIS SUBSEQUENT COMMENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR THAT "REBELS" HE HAS MET CONSIDERED THEMSELVES "FILIPINO MUSLIMS"; THAT SECESSION WOULD BE "ALMOST SUICIDAL," AND THAT ISLAMIC CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETARIAT WOULD AID FILIPINO MUSLIMS AS SOON AS SETTLEMENT REACHED.

4. COVERAGE OF AL TOHAMY REMARKS FROM KUALA LUMPUR ALSO GAVE PHILIPPINE PUBLIC FIRST INKLING OF GOP-MNLF TALSK TO BE HELD IN JIDDA LATER THIS MONTH. (ACCORDING VERSION IN JANUARY 9 TIMES JOURNAL AL TOHAMY SAID HE HIMSELF WILL CHAIR TALKS).

5. SOMEWHAT MORE SURPRISINGLY, LOCAL PRESS ALSO PUBLICIZED WIRE SERVICE VERSION OF AL TOHAMY ASSERTION THAT MARCOS HAS AGREED TO RESTORE MUSLIM LANDS, COMPENSATE MUSLIMS FOR "OTHER LOSSES" AND HELP REPATRIATE THOSE LIVING IN "NORTH" TO SOUTHERN ISLANDS (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO REFUGEES WHO ARE MOSTLY NO FURTHER NORTH THAN MINDANAO.)

6. ONCE AGAIN AL TOHAMY DID NOT MEET WITH OTHER ISLAMIC DIPLOMATS (INCLUDING EGYPTIANS.) INDONESIANS WERE INITIALLY ANNOYED AT TIMING OF HIS VISIT ON EVE OF MALIK ARRIVAL AND (ACCORDING SINGAPORE EMBOFF) SOME INDON DIPLOMATS HERE WERE ASSERTING THAT MALIK WOULD NOT SEE HIM IF AL TOHAMY STILL IN TOWN. HOWEVER, SOME OF THIS ILL-WILL MAY HAVE BEEN IRONED OUT DURING AL TOHAMY'S JAN 5 STOPOVER IN JAKARTA. IT APPEARS THAT AT HIGHER LEVELS GOI UNDERSTANDS GOP NEED TO ACCOMMODATE AL TOHAMY BECAUSE OF PHILIPPINE OIL REQUIREMENTS AND THAT INDONESIANS ARE AWARE GOP WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON THEM FOR MAJOR ASSISTANCE IN DEALING WITH REBELS.

7. COMMENT: AL TOHAMY'S ROLE IN SETTING UP FORTHCOMING JIDDA NEGOTIATIONS PLUS HIS SOMEWHAT MORE HELPFUL PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE CAUSING HIM TO BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY THIS TIME AROUND. ALTHOUGH HIS EGOTISTICAL AND ERRATIC PERSONALITY CONTINUES TO OFFEND MANY (INCLUDING EGYPTIAN COLLEAGUES HERE) IT IS BECOMING CLEAR THAT HE IS NOT USELESS.
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